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OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHML #3685 2480704
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 050704Z SEP 06
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2776
INFO RUEHZS/ASEAN COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUCPDO/USDOC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 2848
RULSJGA/COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUSICWP/COMLOGRUWESTPAC SINGAPORE IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/CDRUSPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC

UNCLAS MANILA 003685

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR EAP/EX AND EAP/MTS
STATE PASS EPA
STATE PASS USAID
USDOC FOR NOAA/NMMS
USDA PASS FOREST SERVICE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [EWWT](#) [TPHY](#) [EAID](#) [SOCI](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: USG TEAM DELIVERS OIL SPILL ASSESSMENT TO PHILIPPINE
GOVERNMENT

REF: A) MANILA 03478

B) MANILA 03549

SUMMARY

¶1. A USG oil spill response team has been assessing damage caused by the oil spilled by tanker "Solar I" in the Guimaras Strait since August 24 and delivered its findings to the Philippine government on September 1. The team has been invited by the Philippine Coast Guard to remain and continue rendering technical advice. Also at the Philippine government's request, USG agencies have delivered satellite imagery of the spill area. End Summary.

U.S. STRIKE TEAM ACTIVITIES

¶2. Three oil spill experts from the U.S. Coast Guard and one scientist from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (the Pacific Strike Team or PST) partnered with the Philippine Coast Guard and experts from the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DENR) to conduct ground and aerial surveys on August 24. The team observed Coast Guard meetings, continuing oil release dispersant application, oil containment by booms, and workers involved in beach clean up.

¶3. The PST has been giving Coast Guard officers regular feedback, resulting in various improvements. Beach workers were initially observed without protective gear, but now have a consistent supply of rubber boots and gloves for beach clean up. The PST was concerned about disposal of the contaminated material, which was placed on the beach in thin plastic bags, which could easily break, polluting the beach or being washed back to the sea. A PCG officer said the PCG took recommendations to find temporary storage for this debris, and ordered two barges to transfer the refuse to temporary storage on a neighboring island. From there, the contaminants will be sent for processing at a disposal facility near Batangas as soon as approved by local officials there.

¶4. While the U.S. Coast Guard team members have been concentrating

on oil spill containment and dispersion, the NOAA scientist on the team along with scientists sent by the tanker's insurer and DENR's mangrove specialist has been mapping damage. In addition to pinpointing damage and suggesting remediation, the NOAA scientist has offered to help the GRP address worker safety for the cleaning crews and craft messages alerting the public that it is safe to fish for and consume seafood. NOAA also submitted satellite images and their interpretation for use by the GRP.

15. The team's initial findings were submitted to the National Disaster Coordination Council on August 31. The eleven-point assessment congratulates the Philippine Coast Guard for its hard work, identifies equipment shortages, recommends organizational changes to enhance efficient response, and suggests strategies for dealing with the media. The team has committed to stay at least another week to continue to give technical advice, assist in the set up of a new command post, and help formulate a public awareness campaign.

INDEMNITY FUNDS AVAILABLE

16. Vessel owner Sunshine Marine Development Corporation is strictly liable for physical and consequential damages under maritime law. The corporation has \$7 million available through its primary insurer. If this amount is exhausted, the Philippine government and claimants such as fishermen can tap into the additional \$310 million available from the International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund. Total damages from this spill have not been estimated. The condition of the vessel and amount of remaining oil are also unknown.

JONES